1931

Monks House,
23rd May.

Dearest Dolphin,

I have only just got your letter, & here I am answering at once. First, birthday: wish for set journey a birthday. I was going to say wedding present, with the enclosed cheque — something entirely useless, I recommend hot combinations or umbrella; (2) if you should see an old looking glass in frame in my taste, which is bad — day a shell between 2 mermaids — gilt, would you get it? I've no glasses here; but then I expect the prices are ruinous — I'd go up to £5 — & also the bringing back impossible, & also I daresay there are as good to be had in London. I enclose a review of your show, to which I can't go, partly because I'm here for Whitsun, partly because all your shows are rendered impossible to me by Angus who drifts round, gently dispassing, & I fall myply ricked under like a lily by a dead fish — a thing that often happens, Theically in Scotland.

I've had to retire to bed for 2 days with a headache, but am now practically recovered. This was not due to my jolly, but to Ethel Smyth, whom I think, seriously, to be deranged in the head. We'd spent the morning ~~fr~~pressing round the Chelsea flower show, a very remarkable sight

bank & banks of flowers, all colours, under a livid awning. for it was
pouring cold, & all the County Lunatics parading with their arms tied
against their sides, — a fascinating but rather shattering performance, —
when Ethel appeared, trumping like a dragoon with a wallet full of
documents. For 3 hours she nailed me to my chair while she rehearsed
the story of her initiation treatment by Adrian Boult. I can't (you'll be
glad to hear) go into it all, but she seems to have gone into the green room,
after he'd been conducting a Bach mass for 6 hours, & insisted that he
should do the Prayer at the BBC; whereupon, according to her, he grossly
insulted her, in presence of the finest artists in Europe, & finally after a
screaming & scratching which rang through the Queen's Hall, ordered
her out of the room. She then went through, with the minutiae &
ingenuity of a maniac, the whole history of her persecution for the last 50
years; brought out old letters, documents, & read them aloud, beat on my
chair with her fists, made me listen, & answer, & agree at every moment,
& finally I had to shout that I had such a headache that unless she stopped
talking I should burst into flames & be consumed. One is perfectly
powerless. She raves & rants; yet has a demoniac shrewdness. So that there's
no escape. "You've got to listen to me - you've got to listen" she kept saying
& indeed the whole of 52 years with her conversation - And its all fabricated,
embroidered, twisted into red hot Egotism: & she's now launched on a Campaign

which means buttering every conductor & worrying every hotelier, & such man or woman, as well as unfortunate friends, until the 'jets that hopeless farrago of birds & [illegible] parts' played & all H B's subscribers printed again. I don't feel I can ever face her unless I & Kitchen are present with red hot pokers again. At the same time, considering her age, I suppose she's a marvel — I see her merits as a writer - but undoubtedly [illegible] & egotism have brewed some bitter misery. Meanwhile, Mrs Hunter has gone stark, over about £10,000, has pledges her lectures to Duveen, & then sold them to pay an overdraft — in short, she has had to sell all her possessions. You remember the house stuffed with furniture? Well, I went to the sale, for a joke, & before I had been there ten minutes had bought a vast writing desk for £6.10, & bid for several chairs, cupboards & carpets, in a state of complete irresponsibility. Mercifully I for the most part failed to get my lots, but Hugh Walpole was landed with 2 decent armchairs & all the bed linen for £40. It was a sordid scene — old Jews clutching bits of pen trays & shaking pots in case they might be cracked. I found myself wedged against a semi-familiar looking lady who said she did not want to bid against me. After a time I seemed to recall that she was Lady Pottentein, & indeed she was, but highly respectable, even sanctimonious, all black, & which I wondered, but saw that she was presented at Court the following night, & behold this talking about the Queen - the Veteran. What a humbug Will is

with his lecture about the evils of aristocracy — & then dressing Alice like a plumber's widow & sending her to Buckingham Palace.

Then we had Violet Hunt-Hueffer (it appears she's a married woman in Astrasse Streets in Berlin, where she signed a document; but not otherwise) & had a lewd & (as it were) talk about her statements as to Rakim's private part & so on. This all based upon things she heard Gentlemen saying to her mother as she was going up to bed at the age of 8. Where she has since reflected upon & drawn her own Conclusions — erratic, slightly. But I ought to be going through the revised version at this moment, instead of scribbling to you. It's hot, but black: now it's snowing: now blue as a cooks egg: very odd weather: the only advantage over November is that it's hot. Lytton & Raymond (to dine sometime) dined with us — Lytton, as ever, always says, very charming: Raymond with every virtue & light charm. Lytton's book is out — I think it far better than Elizabeth, indeed rather masterly in its technique, & the essay read much better to Jetton than separate. Alas, I think he's combed out his rhetoric somewhat in order for us. He had seen Julian Steles he said, & discloses the Cambridge inspection, as it's — but what to be done? He's bound to get a Fellowship, & there Helen will sit for ever, talking, Lytton said, minute provincialities about games & Cambridge tea parties. Percy has got appendicitis,

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so we have a day gardener from Glynde & she said our flowers wont be as good as usual. Nevertheless our garage & our new rooms are very remarkable: the frigidaire is installed, but not working which matters the less as nature is doing it; & we have Electric light Eveything. I dont see what further improvements can be made — Our way of life here — Cooking menues, cutting fresh asparagus from the earth — Seems to me almost Divine (Quite it, there were a Dolphin in the pond under the fish) & I dont (you'll be sorry to hear) really envy you Rome, as I want to write, which needs a table, & then — Lord — how violently our taste in friends differes Lately! How you can go to Rome & there meet Jimmy Sheehan — to me the Quintessence of good American — & Peter Morris, who is explained by your brilliant analysis, as the Cousin of a Duke without a Kilt — I cannot imagine. Far rather would I stay in Jarbeta. Cursort with Ida Rhulman & Emma Vaughan. Those are my sentiments — not, I suppose yours. I suppose Jimmy, Peter & Angus have some mystic charm as I see that Vita has none in your eyes. I suppose it's something to do with the Illusion of Sex: the male sex elludes you: the female me: then I see the male in its reality, you the female.

or how do you account for it? About book & pictures our taste is respectable: about people, so crazy I wouldn't trust a dead leaf to float on it. But I daresay this a matter of no importance, as long as you needn't let in the Princes with Vita, nor I with Peter. I'm amused by the way he just knew that Vita had been told the story of Eddy & Jimmy by a friend under strictest secrecy, & the much deplores it, not so much for Eddy as for Knole. for Eddy swears he will never never marry, owing to J; thus the house will go to a cousin who will sell it to building lots, all because you watched American who talks through his nose! Had it been an actress, or a Duke, I father they wouldn't do much harm indeed; but I daresay its all for the best, that Knole should be cut up into villas, I mean.

Now I must really stop. (It due, my fairness, to my taking a holiday) Lytton just may and had asked him to write an introduction to Duncan's Shaw, which very naturally he refused, thinking Duncan in no need of introduction. Angelica, who wants like the Ladies Complete Letter writer in mistakes, Jeffrey, & some other girl, with sudden flashes of prune softly in her own manner, wants us to go down next Sunday. I shall try to, if it doesn't interfere with your seeing her. But I dont suppose J will be back much before August. Lickert has some (to me) very witty lectures on show; & Varda is said to be also very good, by Raymond. We go back on Monday, & shall be in the thick of publishing Vita's book. So when write & write & write good dolphin B.

NYPL HARRIS 6/6/79

1931

June Ist 52 Tavistock Square

What an angel I am to write, seeing youve never written in answer to my long last--but good hearted as I am, I write to say we spent yesterday with Angelica; who was in high spirits; in blue; i in a new coat; we went off to a field to pinin; but owing to my dense of duty we took m Judith too. They were very amusing--both brought gloves. Angelica a pair of furred one s. Judith brought only one, because as she pointed out, one only brings gloves to show that one has gloves, so that one is enough; and then if one loses it one can bring the other. Angelica saw the sense of this, but of course left both of hers in the car. Then sh refused to touch tongue, but devoured tomatoes raw; and lettuce an liqeur chocolates and a whole box of pine apple chuncks. Then we went down to the sea,and she caught a furry bear caterpillar and put it in her hat.Then we stole up nehind an old gentleman who was sketching. We also found a lamb neing led by a boy on a string, an she stroked its ears. We then went to tea at the Blue Lion where you stay , because she said there is a dear old lady who knows all about her and gives one hot buttered toast. It was a broiling hot day. We had a good deal of conversation at tea. They were both extremely pathetic (to me) about their their being so bad at arithmetic that they would never be

be able to go to Cambridge as Mrs Curtis would say they gould not pass the entrance. Angelica said that she had been able to do decimals, but they had put her so low in the class she was not now allaowed to learn any sums. They spoke with great sadness about this. She said Quentin had nev r written to her, and she is so devoted to him that she cannot bear his being so long away.I said he had gone to Cassis. She said Thanks goodness, then he will come back at last; but he may have grown very thin, or very fat. She said you were coming back in a week to Paris. We are all to co come to what they call Parrots day. She sang us some drinking song in a rollicking voice. Also some Mozart. She blacked all her face by accident and I had to wipe her, then she went to the looking glass and said how dreadful she looked. Of course she looked like a fantastic blue butterfly xxxxxxx beside a tidy cob. Not but what Judithis not a sensible child with a very sad view of life and her responsibilitoes. She wlays knew the right road and Angelica never did. This rather depressed Angelica Then we went back to school and A. asked me not to come and see Beetle, as it would make her shy. Beetle has fallen off a desk and torn her ligaments, so that she has to lie on a chair in the garden.A. tied up the few remaining cherries with gold string from the sweets and took them to Beetle. Then she implored me to come and see Mrs Curtis, which I did n ot want to do, but A. was so pressing that I yielded, and we went off to the drawing room but Mrs C. was at a service. So I went over the school

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with A. and saw all the bedrooms and phtogrpahs of army officers and s a new dress which A. admired very much. As you see I have fallen in love with her, but think her mother very heartless, gallivanting in Rome and never casting a thought my way. Then we left them, they were goin to be read aloud to and do hymn practise. It was on the whole very fine and a great success but how pathetic children are to be sure; full of the wildest feelings I could see, and adumbrations of the future and jealousies and torments, though I think very happy there. Judith s said th worst of school is one is never alone , but A. seemed to like this. So no more. Though had you written I

would have told you some very interesting pieces of news and one that bodes no good to us all this summer. So there.

B.

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I shall be coming to you for half crown, I warn you. It is only our bumper crop. I
see he has paid a bill from Cooks, for Joan alone, but could not take any other steps
Hawks House,
Saturday 6th June. as he doesn't know the name of Ted's agent.

I wrote to you in Rome, about our visit to Angelica, but I dont suppose
you will have got it — a shame only to day the was in fine feather, 155
& we at any rate enjoyed ourselves greatly. It will,
Considering her parentage, how very little she resembles the Bells: or
Mrs Basenals for the matter of that. To me this is most sympathetic.
It is a fine day, & in a short time Jack & Mary will be upon us. Judge
my horror! Mary rang up & said they were taking Southease for
the summer, & were coming down to see it. & might she send the light.
Mercifully, she rang up a second time to say Southease had fallen through,
but they were set upon getting a house near Lewes & were coming
to see agents. I doubt that they will find anything. I couldn't
bear to meet Mary in full finery & fashion on the downs. This
news, is chiefly to the discredit of English Surgeons. Perhaps you
heard how Rosamond Lehmann, who is going to have a baby was
seized with pain. A specialist was sent for & said that the

the canadian had taken place in a wrong hand; & she would certainly die if not operated upon instantly. So they operated, & found everything perfectly normal but they thought that the shock will certainly bring on a miscarriage. The same day Alix was seized with pains. Elly said she thought it was not appendicitis, but the specialist said it was, & must be operated upon instantly. So they cut Alix open & found that there was nothing whatever the matter with her. John L. is in a nursing home having 4 wisdom teeth extracted — I make no doubt they'll pull out the wrong one. I've seen various addments — Peter Lucas one day & Alan Sherbah the day after. Peter seems as merry as a grig; & Alan & Sherbah did nothing but squabble about a parrot — I'd rather many Peters than Alans who looks would work mad & vindictive. I tried to calm them by suggesting that they should own a dog in common. Yes. I think you're right about Ethel. The sad thing is that she had some gift, but now it's utterly distorted. She is now raving against my having headaches & says they're all lies, & could be cured by calomel. Also she's mending all her fences in having the Prior Dare at her expense. Heavens how true it is, Duncan — & Duncan — Again. But why in God's name does Ott: open his shop? Maynard doing? I imagine. It will need some courage to do, as the whole of art & fashion will be there. I thought you'd catch me a clout on the snout for my present; but next year

NYPL
HAMILTON 2/10/68

Wednesday

Will you dine here with me tomorrow? I shall be alone, & perhaps you would like to bring your pencil & do a sketch. Anyhow you must come, as I've got two pictures, which is the apple eyed eye. I don't know how to hang it. Ethel Sands was in great admiration of it. — but all songs when we meet.

Earlier.

B

June 29
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~~Jan~~ Sunday.

x this might be for 3 weeks.

Would you convey to Angus that I will offer £40 for the chair, which I think is about fair — I do this through you, (I will send you the cheque ~~x x x x x x~~ when my money is paid in x) as I feel him so depressing he'll probably dissuade me. Perhaps I might come to tea on Tuesday? — God knows.

B.